

Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the
Congregational Christian Churches, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.,
and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the
Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio

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PROTESTANT OPPORTUNITIES IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

By Francis W. McPeck

For the past quarter of a century Protestantism's record in the field of industrial relations has been—to borrow a phrase—one of “masterly inactivity.” While here and there individual pastors and isolated groups of church folk have ventured into the stormy area of labor-management affairs, their efforts on the whole have been erratic and their practical influence negligible.

Today there are hopeful signs of change. The reasons are not hard to discover. The violent dispute over the Taft-Hartley law, the development of hard-hitting power movements, the war-devastated economics of Europe, the spread of the sense of personal insecurity here at home—all these and other troublous matters are compelling a new Protestant concern for social order. The gradual abandonment of neutrality in the face of momentous economic and ethical questions may be out of fear, rather love, but at least the issues are being joined.

On the liability side, Protestantism's worst handicap is lack of information and understanding of economic forces. The trade union movement is not generally understood, its genuine victories for workers are too seldom appreciated, and the difficult problems of its leadership are often underestimated. Most union officials know perfectly well they deserve criticism. What disturbs them is criticism of the uninformed sort. The same thing goes for management. The first job is to know what one is talking about. And it may be added that the political propaganda surrounding labor law debate, or the heavily slanted stories of the daily press, are hardly avenues of accurate information.



At summer institutes like the School for Social Action at Camp Ihduhapi, pastors and lay leaders study the church's responsibility in the industrial order.

The encouraging thing is that Protestantism is beginning to try to provide opportunities for both its pastors and lay people to know more of the facts first-hand. To be sure, these ventures at present are on a small scale. But they are soundly conceived, and susceptible of growth.

Interdenominational Programs

Under leadership of the Federal Council of Churches' Department of the Church and Economic Life, a second conference on economic and industrial problems will be held February 16-19 in Detroit. As in the case of the first conference several years ago, the delegates will be drawn principally from the ranks of the laity and the emphasis will be placed on solutions that they, and not the clergy, propose. At the same time, a three-year study in the field of

ethics and economics, financed by a foundation grant of \$100,000 and directed by the Department, will be well under way.

A notable addition to the Federal Council's program was inaugurated this past year. Namely, the holding of seminars for pastors and other church people in conjunction with the annual meetings of labor organizations and other important economic groups. The schedule for 1949-1950 is reproduced on page 4 of this issue, and attendance is encouraged.

For young people of college age the summer Students-in-Industry projects are offering, in a number of cities, the chance to learn something of the industrial world from the work bench level. Sponsored jointly by the YMCA and the YWCA, and capably directed, these

student-workers get a good block of experience and daily opportunities to discuss it from the standpoint of Christian ethics. Similar groups are under direction of the Baptists, the Brethren, the Mennonites, and the Friends.

Since 1945 numerous universities have established departments or divisions of industrial relations. Not only have they responsibility for primary research, but a number of them are already engaged in wide-scale adult educational activities. More commonly the programs are intended for trade unionists and management personnel, but in some instances they include church and other groups. Thus for nine years the School for Workers of the University of Wisconsin has invited clergymen to attend its summer sessions, and the University of Chicago, cooperating with the Federal Council, threw open its doors this summer to ministers for a six-weeks study of ethics and economics. Other universities are offering comparable services, and the trend seems growing.

A most important work is sponsored by the National Religion and Labor Foundation. The frank objective of this organization is to bring together clergymen and labor leadership on the local level. In some cities—Cincinnati, for example—the monthly meetings have resulted in real fellowship and better understanding. The annual meeting for the national group this year was attended by over 200 men and women from the

churches and the union movement. A student division of the Foundation is also operative in a number of seminaries, affording prospective ministers a measure of insight into the world of industrial affairs.

Denominational Projects

Denominational programs seeking to give active pastors a better grasp of the problems of urban churchmanship are growing in number. Best-known of all are the month-long study periods conducted by the staff of the Presbyterian Institute of Industrial Relations, which has its headquarters in New York, but which conducts schools during the year in Chicago and on the West Coast. Recently the Protestant Episcopal Church initiated a similar venture at Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Though the range of subject material falling under the heading "urban churchmanship" is broad, attention is given in generous measure to problems of economics, the labor movement, and aspects of industrial relations.

Among Congregational-Christians and Evangelical and Reformed people, there is growing interest in the "industrial retreat" idea. Most of them already held have been intended primarily for active ministers. From two to five days are spent in some quiet place away from town in discussion of labor law, economic trends, developments in the union field, moral theology, and the role of

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Rev. Arthur D. Gray, Pastor
Mr. Oscar Holste, Labor Leader
Mr. Stanley Simpson, Businessman
Mrs. Martha Snyder, Housewife
Mrs. Frederick Plocher, Teacher
Mr. Robert Cleland, Accountant
Professor William J. Halfter, Educator
Mr. Carl Turner, Unionist
Mr. Herbert G. Winter, Production Engineer

the church. Through discussions sometimes stray away into far fields, most of the time retreat members concentrate on questions of fact and how to make profitable use of what they learn in parish experience. These retreats are sponsored by the Council for Social Action and by local CSA groups.

A later development has been retreats for laymen, arranged by the CSA and members of the Laymen's Fellowship of the denomination. Outstanding has been the experience of a dozen Michigan laymen meeting in Detroit. After three week-end periods last Spring, the group, with a deep sense of fellowship and a heightened interest in their discussion of economic and industrial matters, agreed to meet monthly throughout the remainder of the year. The arguments carried on between unionists and management men in the group are realistic and without soft-pedaling, but the spirit of Christian friendship has allowed the development of real understanding of how differently members *feel* about the points raised.

Adding it up

This recital of some of the things the churches are doing is necessarily fragmentary. The big thing to note is that they are beginning to grapple with the serious issues of economic life.

Protestantism has its liabilities. The failure to make industrial order an ethical and practical concern for the whole of church life has given some labor and management leadership the idea that Protestants aren't interested. Sometimes, too, expressions of interest have

Services of Our Industrial Relations Office

Address: 1164 East 58th St., Chicago 37, Illinois

Secretary: The Rev. Francis W. McPeck

1. Want help in organizing an industrial relations retreat?

We shall be glad to give you information based on past experience, suggest names of leaders, and printed materials. In some instances, the Secretary may be able to be present.

2. Want information about special industrial relations problems?

We don't mean local ones, which you know better than we—such as, "Who's right or wrong in the X Company strike?" But we can suggest current reading on union development, industrial relations problems, and so on.

3. Want to receive the LABOR LETTER?

Personal weekly comment by the Secretary on happenings in the labor movement, social action efforts by church leaders, and the like. No subscription price, but contributions invited.

4. Want help at association or state conference time?

If it's program planning time, and if there's a place for spot-lighting industrial relations problems on it, we'll try to help.

been poorly advised, and have generated actual hostility.

On the other hand, there are assets to be seen. The "neutral" who gets down from his perch at least doesn't have to answer to resentments that past participants may have acquired. The start can be a fresh one. Nor is Protestantism crippled with the ideological preconceptions that sometimes prevent other groups from facing issues squarely and on their merits.

We are on the eve of a stormy decade in national and world affairs. It doesn't take a crystal ball to foresee tremendous power-clashes in the 1950's and the hammering out of a new social order. Whether Protestantism has anything to say about it will depend first of all on how much and how fast its membership can learn about the industrial scene, and secondly, on the degree to which its membership—ministers and lay people—are willing to accept the responsibilities of leadership that normally come to them.

What is called for is not only intelligence and nerve, but a renewed conviction—based not on fear but love—that the Christian gospel, as Protestants understand it, still has a vital message and program for a world entering into deepening economic conflict.

NATIONAL STUDY CONFERENCE

The second National Study Conference on the Church and Economic Life will be held at Detroit, Michigan, February 16-19, 1950. The conference theme is "The Responsibility of Christians in an Inter-dependent Economic Order." Among the topics to be discussed are conflicting motives and claims in economic life, freedom of enterprise and social control, and the relation of American standards of living to the world's needs and resources.

Appointment of delegates, on a quota basis which defines the percentages of clergy, labor, business, farm, and other occupations, is in the hands of the executive bodies of the denominations making up the Federal Council. It is expected that some of the study materials will be available for general use before and after the conference.

SPEAKING OF BOOKS

If you have not worked through the Amsterdam Assembly series, you will find highly rewarding the omnibus volume, *Man's Disorder and God's Design*, published by Harper, \$5.00. This contains the preparatory papers as well as the Section reports. The *Official Report* containing all proceedings of the World Council has been issued by the same publisher, at \$3.50. The *Findings and Decisions* of the Assembly are available separately from the World Council of Churches, 297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y. Groups desiring to concentrate on *The Church and the Disorder of Society* may secure reprints of the latter from the Department of the Church and Economic Life of the Federal Council of Churches, at ten cents each, with twenty per cent discount on quantities over 100.

John Bennett has given one of the most lucid discussions of a commonly oversimplified subject in *Christianity and Communism*, Association Press, \$1.50. Dr. Bennett recognizes what is valid in the Marxist protest against traditional economics, politics, and religion without being thereby led to minimize its reactionary and idolatrous character. Neither does his awareness of the evil in communism betray him into endorsing the superficial and hysterical counter-measures that commonly pass as the "Christian" answer. A good

book well deserving of individual and group study.

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Henry F. May, in *Protestant Churches and Industrial America*, Harper and Brothers, \$3.50, traces the varied responses made by the "old line" denominations in the presence of the economic changes of the nineteenth century. Without minimizing theological and ethical factors, the author demonstrates the large role played by the economic crises and labor conflicts of the period 1877-1895 in dissolving the post-civil-war complacency and in developing social Christianity along conservative, progressive, and radical lines.

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Glimpses into the industrial and social life of the same and succeeding periods are afforded from another angle by Ray Ginger's *The Bending Cross: A Biography of Eugene Victor Debs*, Rutgers University Press, \$5.00. The life of America's foremost Socialist affords a revealing background against which to evaluate the present economic and political objectives of the labor movement.

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And by way of theological sustenance, try *Faith and History* (Scribners, \$3.50), wherein Reinhold Niebuhr distinguishes the Christian interpretation of history from competing views, classical and modern, and demonstrates the relevance of the Christian view.

CSA Ponders Economic Puzzle

The Council for Social Action met at Seabury House, Greenwich, Connecticut, for a long week-end, June 23 to 27. Two full days of discussion were given over to industrial relations. Resource persons included Rev. Cameron P. Hall, of the Department of the Church and Economic Life of the Federal Council of Churches, and Professor Douglass V. Brown, of Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the research staff of the Committee for Economic Development.

Considerable time was given to the question of registration under the Lobbying Act and other concerns of the Legislative Committee. It was announced that Washington Seminars are being

planned for February 7, March 7, April 18 and May 9, 1950.

Dean Liston Pope, of the Yale Divinity School, was elected a member of the Council to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of the Reverend Shannon Graham.

With virtually all returns in showing overwhelming ratification of the Basis of Union with Interpretations, plans for accelerated cooperation with the Commission on Christian Social Action were studied. The executive committee of CSA will meet at Holliday Hills YMCA, Pawling, N. Y., together with the Commission, on Tuesday and Wednesday, September 13 and 14.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Requests for regular mailings or additional copies for Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.

Suggestions for Observing Labor Day in the Churches

1. Make use of the **LABOR SUNDAY MESSAGE** of the Federal Council.
2. Preach a sermon dealing with the labor movement and Christian responsibilities. (Please send a copy of it to the Industrial Relations Secretary.)
3. Invite laymen from labor and management to share the sermon time on Sunday morning on some topic as "The Responsibility of Christians in Labor and Management."
4. Hold a Sunday evening forum discussion on industrial relations by inviting (a) local labor and management leaders to discuss some current issue, or (b) someone from a nearby university or union office to discuss contemporary unionism and its problems.
5. Hold a round-table discussion on the Federal Council's new statement, **THE CHURCH LOOKS AT INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**. Read the statement aloud before launching into the discussion.

SOCIAL ACTION IS NEWS

Social action in the Protestant churches has made the pages of the *Woman's Home Companion*. The July issue carries an article by Helena Huntington Smith, entitled "What Are Our Churches Coming To?" Reprints of a one-page newspaper display condensation may be secured free on request from Woman's Home Companion, Crowell-Collier Publishing Co., 250 Park Ave., New York 17, N. Y. We suggest you write for enough copies to mail to your members.

Economic Seminars for Church Leaders

The following seminars are being planned in connection with the annual meeting of the national economic organizations by the Department of the Church and Economic Life of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America:

American Federation of Labor—St. Paul, Minnesota,—October 6-7.

Congress of Industrial Organizations—Cleveland, Ohio—October 31—November 1.

National Association of Manufacturers—New York City—December 7-8.

National Council of Farmer Cooperatives—to be announced.

American Economic Association—Chicago, Illinois—December 27-28.

These seminars are open to ministers, lay leaders, and others interested in seeing these national "power groups" in action, meeting speakers and officers of the organizations, and discussing the improvement of church and parish programs in the light of the economic realities and insights induced by the seminar. Applications may be secured from the Reverend Francis W. McPeck, 1164 E. 58th St., Chicago 37, Illinois, or the Reverend Huber F. Klemme, 2969 W. 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

FOR LABOR SUNDAY—AND AFTER

With this issue of *Christian Community* we are sending to all pastors a copy of the *Labor Sunday Message* issued by the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America. Additional copies may be secured for distribution at the quantity prices quoted below.

We commend for careful consideration also a statement prepared by the Department of the Church and Economic Life and adopted by the Executive Committee of the Federal Council, entitled *The Church Looks at Industrial Relations*. This contains not only a balanced presentation of the issues involved in the closed shop and other forms of compulsory union membership, but a summary of the conditions of good labor-management relations.

The statement, *Basic Christian Principles and Assumptions*, previously issued by the Federal Council, is still deserving of study.

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Order from

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Evangelical and Reformed Church
2969 W. 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio

Or

Department of Church & Economic Life
Federal Council of Churches
297 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

..... copies **Labor Sunday Message 1949** (5 cents each; \$2.00 for 100; \$6.00 for 500; \$8.50 for 1000)

..... copies **The Church Looks at Industrial Relations** (five cents each; \$4.00 per 100)

..... copies **Basic Christian Principles and Assumptions** (ten cents each; \$8.00 per 100)

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